At present there is no proposal for import of coconut oil during 1992-93 for Public Distribution System.

Bridge Over Kanhar River

897. SHRI RAM NIHOR RAI: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the scheme for construction of bridge on Kanhar River linking Sonbhadra-Mirzapur with Madhya Pradesh-Bihar has been pending for finalisation for the last several years;

(b) if so, the reasons for the delay; and

(c) the time by which the work on this bridge is likely to be started?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): (a) to (c). The Govt. of India are constitutionally responsible for maintenance and development of roads declared as national Highways. The proposed bridge over river Kanhar, when constructed, would fall on a State Road. As such its construction essentially vests with the concerned State Government.

[*English*]

Import of Almonds from USA

898. PROF. K.V. THOMAS: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the trade agreement signed with USA for import of almonds;

(b) whether the Government are aware that licence for import of almonds given to dry fuit importers are sold at a premium in the country; and

(c) if so, the steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c). In may 1988, a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding was signed between USA and India on import of almonds. the main elements of this Understanding were that the global import authorization of almonds by India for shelled and unshelled almonds was set at US $ 20 million annually for the three year period 1988-91. The minimum value of licences was to be increased to Rs. 20,000/-. The Govt. of India agreed that notwithstanding the provisions of any export obligation, the issue of import authorisation of almonds would be maintained at the aforementioned levels. For the period 1991-1994, almonds would be placed on OGL, if the balance-of-payment position improved to such an extent that the foreign exchange reserves provided for 6 months of imports. If the BOP position continued to be unsatisfactory, the import authorization at a level of US $ 20 million would continue. Before March 31, 1994 consultations would be held for the purpose of agreeing on annual import authorization levels for almonds for subsequent periods. These consultations would be based on an assessment of India's external reserves and overall balance-of-payments position. As part of GATT Article XXVIII negotiations, Government of India also agreed to bind its tariffs on almonds at the levels of Rs. 50/- per Kg. for shelled almonds and Rs. 28/- per Kg. for unshelled almonds.

In terms of Para 166 of the current Import Policy, as announced on 30.3.1990, import licences could be obtained by the eligible importers of dry fruits to the extent of 25% of the c.i.f. value of best year's import in respect of dry fruits (excluding Cashew nuts and dates) during any of the financial years, from 1972-73 onwards subject to a minimum of Rs. 20,000/-. In addition, each eligible dry fruit licence could also get separate licence